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WASHINGTON - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, in partnership with The George Washington University Law School, will convene an international forum on the reconstruction of Afghanistan on Wednesday, January 29.

Distinguished speakers include Zalmay Khalilzad, Special Presidential Envoy to Afghanistan and Ambassador-at-Large to Free Iraqis; Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-NE), Sponsor of the Afghanistan Freedom Support Act and Member, Senate Foreign Relations Committee; and Andrew Natsios, Administrator, US Agency for International Development.

Participants will discuss how the protection of religious freedom and other human rights can be incorporated into Afghanistan's new constitution, judicial system, and laws; how tolerance can be instilled in a society which has known enmity and war for the last thirty years; and what the United States can do to assist.

Prominent Afghan and U.S. government officials, along with experts on religious freedom, human rights, Islamic law, judicial reform, and rule of law, will address these issues in a day-long event. Lorne Craner, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; Wendy Chamberlin, USAID Assistant Administrator for Asia and Near East; Amb. Karl F. Inderfurth, Professor of the Practice of International Affairs, the Elliott School, The George

Washington University, and former Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs (1997-2001); Mavis Leno, Chair, Feminist Majority's Campaign for Afghan Women and Girls; and Sima Wali, President of Refugee Women in Development will also participate. Abdul Rahim Karimi, Minister of Justice, will lead the Afghan delegation, which includes other members of the Transitional Islamic Government of Afghanistan. The program follows:

"Reconstructing Afghanistan: Freedom in Crisis," Wednesday, January 29, 2003

Introduction 9:00 - 9:30am [GW Media Center, 805 21st Street, NW - set of CNN's "Crossfire"]

Welcome by Commission Chair Felice D. Gaer, GWU Law School Dean Michael K. Young, and Ishaq Shahryar, Afghan Ambassador to the United States

Keynote and Featured Speakers 9:30 - 10:30am

Zalmay Khalilzad (Keynote), Special Presidential Envoy to Afghanistan and Ambassador-at-Large to Free Iraqis

Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-NE), Sponsor of the Afghanistan Freedom Support Act and Member, Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Andrew Natsios, Administrator, US Agency for International Development

Panel One: The Human Rights Challenge in Transitional Afghanistan 10:30am - Noon

Dr. Abdul Aziz Sachedina, Director, Institute on Islam and Democracy, University of Virginia

Robert Templer, South Asia Program Director, International Crisis Group

Dr. Frank Vogel, Director of the Islamic Legal Studies Program, Harvard Law School

Luncheon 12:15 -1:15pm

Afternoon Speakers: 1:30-2:00pm [The Jacob Burns Moot Courtroom, 2000 H Street, NW]

Judge John R. Tunheim, U.S. Dist. Ct. (D.Minn.); a leader in the judicial reconstruction of Kosovo

Mavis Leno, Chair, Feminist Majority's Campaign for Afghan Women and Girls

Panel Two: Implementing Human Rights Protections 2:00 - 3:30pm

Ian Martin, Vice President, International Center for Transitional Justice

Neamat Nojumi, former USAID consultant in Kabul

Sima Wali, President, Refugee Women in Development

Gay McDougall, Executive Director, International Human Rights Law Group

Panel Three: The U.S. Role in Promoting Human Rights in Afghanistan 3:45 - 5:15pm

Lorne Craner, Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

Amb. Wendy Chamberlin, USAID Assistant Administrator for Asia and the Near East

Amb. Karl F. Inderfurth, Professor of the Practice of International Affairs, the Elliott School, George Washington University, and former Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs (1997-2001)

Marin Strmecki, Vice President and Director of Programs, Smith Richardson Foundation

Amb. Peter Tomsen, Diplomatic Associate, Center for Afghanistan Studies, University of Nebraska at Omaha, and former Special U.S. Envoy to the Afghan Resistance

Members of the Afghan delegation will join the various panels:

Abdul Rahim Karimi, Minister of Justice

Mahbuba Hoquqmal, Minister of State for Women's Affairs

Dr. Mohammad Qasim Hashimzai, Deputy Minister of Justice

Bahauddin Baha, Chairman, Judicial Reform Commission

Quadir Amiryar, Judicial Reform Commission

Hanagama Anwari, National Human Rights Commission

Mohammad Farid Hamidi, National Human Rights Commission

Musa M. Maroofi, Constitutional Drafting Committee

Gul Rahman Qazi, Chairman, Department of Public Policy, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Kabul University

Fatima Gailani, Advocate for women's rights and social development

U. S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Commissioners in Attendance:

Felice Gaer (Chair), Director, Jacob Blaustein Institute for Human Rights

Michael Young, (Vice-Chair), Dean, George Washington University Law School

Firuz Kazemzadeh, Professor Emeritus, Yale University

Richard Land, President, Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, Southern Baptist Convention

Leila Nadya Sadat, Professor, Washington University School of Law

Nina Shea, Director, Center for Religious Freedom, Freedom House

Shirin Tahir-Kheli, Professor, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University

John Hanford, Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom, U.S. Department of State

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

- Felice D. Gaer
- Dean Michael K. Young